

## Chapter Three • Community Character, Appearance, and Design





## Chapter 3

# Community Character, Appearance, and Design

### Introduction

The City of Falls Church is defined as much by its social character as its visual character. This chapter focuses on both of those features. Its social qualities include a range of residential neighborhoods, excellent public schools and library, valuable historic resources, an active business community, and residents who are very involved in various social and civic activities. Falls Church residents strive to pass on the traditions and heritage of the community to future residents and generations. This commitment to the constant preservation and improvement of the City gives Falls Church a special character.

The City's visual character or appearance is reflected in its tree-lined streets, quaint parks and open spaces, attractive residential neighborhoods, village atmosphere, pedestrian orientation, unified street treatments in the Broad Street corridor, and architecturally significant buildings throughout the City. A combination of these physical and social qualities make up Falls Church's sense of place.

Falls Church is part of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area as well as being a component of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Being so close to the nation's capitol has a large impact on the City in terms of cultural and political activity, as well as on the characteristics of its citizenry. The City's high average educational and income levels are characteristic of the Northern Virginia/D.C. metropolitan region as are its large percentage of government employees.

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### Existing Community Character

**T**he City of Falls Church has been described as a place where a small population and a strong sense of community allow the average person the opportunity to know his or her neighbors. It has also been described as a "comprehensive community" that offers its citizens all the elements of a good place to live, such as a mix of residential neighborhoods with quality housing, a family atmosphere, shopping, recreation, cultural activities, excellent schools, religious institutions, accessible and responsive government, convenient location, and physical attractiveness. The City is also characterized by its quality businesses, which are integral to the community's vitality. City residents have traditionally demonstrated very high levels of voter participation in local, state and national elections. The Falls Church community also has a long his-

tory of activism dating back to the early days of the Temperance movement after the Civil War. This involvement continued with the movement for independent city status in order to create a separate school system after the World War II. The City has continued to make education a priority to the extent that its public school system has become exemplary.

Activism is still alive in the array of organizations working on issues ranging from historic preservation to stream restoration, tree preservation, and traffic management. Public commissions and committees and private civic organizations are an important part of the community's character as Falls Church is home to more than twenty-nine public boards and commissions with nearly 200 citizen volunteer members. These bodies include, but are not limited to: the Planning Commission, the Historic

## 14 Chapter Three

Architectural Review Board, the Architectural Advisory Board, the Board of Zoning Appeals, the Tree Commission and the Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation. A number of private, non-profit organizations also exist within the City, including the Village Preservation and Improvement Society, the Falls Church League of Women Voters, Chamber of Commerce, and the Lion's Club.

Community activities and celebrations also play an integral role in defining the City's character. The City of Falls Church hosts and sponsors a number of these activities: for example, the Memorial Day celebrations; a Fourth of July fireworks celebration; the Tinner's Hill Street Festival; Cherry Hill concerts; a weekly Farmer's Market; the Fall Festival; and Farm Day. These celebrations display the uniqueness of the community and aid with economic development.



The City's government complex that includes City Hall, the Mary Riley Styles Public Library, the Community Center, and Cherry Hill Park, is a focal point for the community. Many different activities occur on these grounds both during the day and in the evening.



During the past 50 years the City of Falls Church has received a number of honors. National awards include the All America City award in 1961; the Tree City, USA award won every year since 1978; the Bill of Rights City award in 1992; and the school system was cited for being exemplary by the U.S. Office of Education during the 1980s. Falls

Church has also won a Comprehensive Community Award from the Virginia Recycling Association and in 2002 and 2005 won a Gold level achievement awards from the Chesapeake Bay Community Partners Program.



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Another element of the City's character is the mobility of its population. According to the Northern Virginia Databook, approximately 45 percent of persons residing in the City in 2000, moved into the City between 1995 and 2000. On the other hand, one of five householders in the City has been living at his/her current address for 25 years or more. The turnover rate is high, and yet the citizen participation rate is extraordinary.

### Existing and Future Visual Character and Design

In December, 2001 the City adopted its long-awaited Design Guidelines. The 1997 Comprehensive Plan frequently cited a "Community Appearance Plan" that was to be created. The "Falls Church Design Guidelines" assumed the role of the forecasted "Community Appearance Plan". The adoption of this document is a good indication of the City's commitment to continually improving its appearance. These guidelines will aid the City in ensuring that future development will enhance the City's distinctive character and sense of place while placing an emphasis on aesthetic quality.

One of the City's primary goals is to mold the physical form of buildings and spaces, and influence the mix of uses such that it can become a walkable community with a "sense of place". A "sense of place" creates an image that is both enjoyable and memorable. This sense can be built on a particular distinctive element, a building, landscaping, or a special view. It can also be a mosaic of details that creates a fine-grained streetscape. Individuality of design can create a sense of place, and so can a theme of common design elements.

Another City goal is to create a unique physical identity both within the Falls Church mailing address area and the region. The environment should be such that people can tell when they are entering and exiting the City. This can be done through building form, streetscape, and entrance features in primary gateways to the City. It is important to the City that persons can distinguish the



geographic area of the City of Falls Church from the greater Falls Church mailing address area.

A walkable community means creating an attractive, safe and convenient connecting network for pedestrians and other non-automotive forms of transportation. The City is working on controlling traffic, speed, and volume through a variety of calming techniques to foster the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. All recent buildings in the City's commercial corridors are located close to the sidewalk, and most have first floor display windows, which creates an interesting and secure environment for pedestrians.

The Broad Street streetscape improvements are another good example of creating a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere with wide sidewalks, pedestrian crosswalks, and attractive landscaping and street furniture. The W&OD Trail passes through the City offering a safe pathway for pedestrians and cyclists and the overpass on West Broad Street is an additional safety feature. Attractive public spaces are also key to making a City attractive to pedestrians. They encourage people to stop or gather in certain locations, making streets more lively and interesting. The area surrounding City Hall, Cherry Hill Park, and the Community Center includes several examples of attractive, well-landscaped public spaces.

All new development projects are encouraged to include these features – attractive public spaces, convenient and safe pedestrian connections, as well as bicycle racks. These projects are encouraged to be appealing and convenient both to pedestrians and patrons arriving by vehicle. Through each redevelopment project, the City hopes to improve the pedestrian network. It is understood that with new development will come more vehicular traffic, yet if the City can create an environment that allows and encourages its residents and visitors to walk from place to place, the quality of life will be enhanced.

The majority of the City's residential areas are stable and attractive neighborhoods. However, a significant portion of the City's commercial areas are not visually cohesive and certain sections are unappealing. Improving design elements in these areas through renovations and redevelopment efforts can provide the City with a greater residential and commercial sense of community and pride. Improvements such as complimentary architecture, building materials, and streetscape elements can also attract people to the City both to live and do business here. Implementation of the City's Design Guidelines in these areas will aid in the effort to create greater cohesion.

The following sections describe the existing character of the residential and business sections of the City and establish a basis for the future character of the areas. The

City's Design Guidelines provide the details necessary to guide new development and redevelopment, such that a cohesive image is created within different sections of the City and visual linkages are created between these areas.

### Commercial Corridor Character

The crossroads and village that would become the City of Falls Church grew gradually over two hundred years until the middle of the twentieth century. With the rapid growth of Washington, D.C. and the Virginia suburbs since the Second World War the City of Falls Church has grown in a typically suburban manner, but with predominantly low density commercial development. Much of the existing commercial form and architecture reflects the average "strip" shopping center and automobile-oriented development characteristic of the 1960s and 70s. These shopping centers, with their large parking areas along Broad Street and South Washington Street, developed as part of a trend in the nation and without much planning.

There are some areas in the commercial corridors that are not stereotypically "strip" development; however, there is not much consistency in design throughout the Broad and Washington Streets corridors. Many buildings have been designed without a regard to the overall pattern of design in the area or to neighboring structures.

The Downtown, West End of Broad Street, North and South Washington Street corridors, and Gordon Road Triangle should redevelop with a somewhat more urban theme than what currently exists. Urban environments, according to noted urban planner Peter Calthorpe, should contain housing for a diverse population, a full mix of residential, commercial, and civic uses, walkable streets, positive public transportation, and integrated civic and commercial spaces. These areas could contain buildings that are as high as the existing zoning districts or special exception process will allow and of a variety of styles with small front yard setbacks and underground or well designed or screened above-ground structured parking. The following sections go into greater detail about the creation of an urban theme.

It is important that an identifiable image be created for each of the City's commercial areas. These images should reflect and communicate different concepts – that a particular area is intended for shopping, dining, or leisure. An area that can convey a combination of all of these concepts will be lively and successful.

A welcoming pedestrian-oriented design and safe and convenient pedestrian access are necessary features of the City's commercial areas. These facilities must be built into the fabric of the commercial corridors, especially in the City Center area. Pedestrian facilities in residential

neighborhoods are also important and the linkages between these areas and the commercial corridors is a critical feature of encouraging residents to leave their cars at home to accomplish many of their daily errands. The West Broad Street streetscape improvement program has begun to accomplish some of these goals and more enhancement programs are planned for the future.

The following section describes the existing character and design of the City's commercial areas, as well as suggested design changes for the future.

### **The Broad Street Corridor**

The Broad Street Corridor, like most of the City's commercial areas, includes a variety of architectural styles and design elements. Even within the different sections of this corridor, the streetscape varies with different setbacks, parking lot locations, building sizes, landscaping, etc. These differences were recognized in the Adopted Streetscape Plan for West Broad Street, August 1987. Certain areas were identified by this plan as urban sub-districts where there are five roadway travel lanes and the Village sub-district where there are only four travel lanes. Different streetscape features were recommended on the basis of the different character perceived and desired within these areas.

The adopted Streetscape Plan includes the construction of brick sidewalks and street crosswalks, planters, trees and shrubs, cohesive lighting, and street furniture. Streetscape improvements on West Broad Street are expected to be completed through private development projects as they occur and some funding could be acquired through grant mechanisms. The completed improvements in the Downtown and West End sections have already had a positive impact on the appearance of Broad Street, making it more inviting to pedestrians and motorists and providing a visually cohesive element throughout the corridor.

One concept proposed by City residents has been to create a mile-long pedestrian corridor on West Broad Street from Washington Street to the West End. Such a corridor would contain interesting and attractive storefronts with landscaping, public spaces, artwork, outdoor dining, and other pedestrian amenities. This type of environment would entice pedestrians to walk from one end of West Broad Street to the other as people do in Georgetown or Old Town Alexandria.

A description of the existing and future character of the three commercial areas in the Broad Street corridor located between Haycock Road and Lawton Street is given below.

### **West End**

The West End extends from Haycock Road (Fairfax County line) to Spring Street. It is primarily characterized by strip retail shopping facilities with large areas of asphalt paving, which is indicative of their late 1950s and early 1960s origin. The Falls Plaza and West End Shopping Centers are the biggest commercial developments in this area. They have both been substantially renovated during the past five years. A number of small independent one-story businesses also exist on the north side of West Broad Street including two banks, a gas station and carwash, an automobile service facility, and a church. On the south side of West Broad Street is a large automobile dealership, several fast food restaurants, several small independent retail business structures, and two small retail strip shopping centers, one of which is a two story structure, with some office space on top. Building setbacks vary significantly in this area with some buildings fronting close to the sidewalk and others setback behind parking lots. This section of Broad Street is the widest at five lanes.

### **Gateway Features**

Haycock/Shreve Road is the City's approximate boundary with Fairfax County, and yet because the City owns the George Mason Middle School/High School property and used to own the Northern Virginia Graduate Center site, it is commonly perceived that the edge of the school property or I-66 is the City boundary. The Gordon Road triangle area, with its automobile sales and service businesses and the Falls Plaza and West End Shopping Centers, defines the existing character of this area. A sign currently exists within a landscaped median to denote the entrance to the City near the intersection of Haycock/Shreve Road and West Broad Street. The City should consider additional landscaping features or other features at this location to make the boundary more clear.

### **Significant Architectural Features**

Notable architectural features in this section of Broad Street include the St. James Catholic Church at the intersection of West Broad and Spring Street and several pieces of public artwork within the Don Beyer Volvo complex. St. James Church is a stone structure with classic Gothic architectural features. It would be difficult to recreate many of these gothic features in commercial development along Broad Street; however, public artwork can be placed anywhere, and should be wherever possible.

### **The Future Character of the West End of Broad Street**

Redevelopment in the west end area should focus on creating several concepts: a more urban character west of

the W&OD Trail; a more uniform appearance among the existing establishments in the West End; a link between this area and the Village section of Broad Street; and an overall image, which is less characteristic of Northern Virginia's traditional "strip commercial" developments. Facade improvements, architectural compatibility and many other elements discussed below can create these types of concepts. Development of new structures and facade improvements should incorporate as much landscaping as possible. The existing streetscape improvements provide a solid basis for these improvements with-in future redevelopment schemes.

Access points to a number of shopping facilities on the south side of West Broad Street in this area should be consolidated to increase pedestrian safety and interparcel access should be encouraged to make vehicular and pedestrian access between sites more safe and convenient.



The close proximity to the W&OD Trail and overpass creates an attractive environment for commercial development that is enticing and provides adequate access to cyclists and pedestrians. The overpass at the intersection with West Broad Street provides a logical place for cyclists and pedestrians to get off of the trail for food or beverages or to park their bikes and walk to shopping facilities. This area should also be visually appealing to persons who pass through the City in vehicles enticing them to shop or dine or to park and walk as they might in the Downtown or Village sections.

Retail or retail-looking establishments are encouraged to create the type of curb appeal that is needed in the West Broad Street area. Don Beyer Volvo has already created a retail image for its automobile dealership with offices that look like small rowhouses with themes such as the corner market and barber shop. Even quasi-industrial businesses can create an interesting appearance with large display windows on the first floor, pedestrian scale buildings, buildings located close to the sidewalk with parking located in structures to the side, rear, in the center or buildings, or underground (primarily in structures),

interesting architecture, signage and generous landscaping. New development adjacent to Park Avenue should be compatible with existing residences.

### Village Section

This area extends from Spring Street to Little Falls Street and is generally only one lot to one block deep on either side of Broad Street. Broad Street is narrower in this section than at any other point in the commercial corridor with four travel lanes. The area has historically contained numerous individual buildings with little or no relationship to each other. This character is however in flux. The construction of the uniform streetscape feature is nearing completion and several new development projects have been approved for the area. These projects will play a key role in redefining this section of the City.

The recently completed Broadway residential condominium, office, and retail development in the 500 block of West Broad Street is the first significant redevelopment to occur in this area of the City. It will begin to set the tone for future redevelopment in the area in terms of more efficiency in land use and general design themes. In addition, the recently approve Byron and Pavilion development projects will contribute to the theme of greater density, mixed-use, and a more cohesive design element for the Village section of West Broad Street. These projects will have retail activity on the first floor at the street level and will provide for a vibrant environment. Together these three projects will form a focal point of activity within the City.



The only two properties in this section of West Broad Street that have a substantial setback with parking in front are the Broaddale Shopping Center and the small strip with Anthony's Pizza. The Broaddale Shopping Center was renovated during the 1980s. The significant landscaping additions reduce the visual impact of parking in front of the center. No changes are expected for this property in the near future. The 300 block of West Broad Street is anticipated to redevelop either individually or as part of a larger redevelopment plan to include the



Post Office and possibly the City-owned property adjacent to it. Through the redevelopment process the existing setback may be reduced if parking is consolidated with adjoining parcels, possibly in a structured facility.

### **The Future Character of the Village Section**

This Plan recommends a mixture of medium-scale integrated commercial and residential uses in this area. The commercial components should continue to generate street level activity. The "Mixed-Use" land use category and appropriate zoning tools should be used to accommodate these types of uses.

Post offices and other civic buildings have historically been considered the nerve centers of villages. Even though the Falls Church City Post Office is technically considered part of the Downtown, it is right on the border and can function as an integral component of the Village section's commercial and residential mix. Any redevelopment of the Post Office should be done with the concept of integrating and making this building one of the unifying components between the Downtown/City Center area and the Village section. City Hall, the Community Center, Cherry Hill Park, and the Mary Riley Styles Library should also be considered part of this mini-village in the center of the City.

The City Hall/Municipal complex and surrounding parcels are classified within the O-D (Official Design) Zoning District and were designated in an Official Design overlay on the 1988 Land Use Plan Map. The Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Map no longer includes this overlay designation. This district also was created such that no building can be constructed without considering its effect on the whole official design area. In the case of the municipal complex, any new construction in its vicinity should be compatible with the architecture of the City Hall building and the Cherry Hill Farmhouse and park.



Buildings in this area should be constructed with heights that are adequate to support the addition of residences above commercial establishments, but that do not significantly exceed those of the majority of the existing buildings. The West Broad Street Streetscape Improvement Plan

should be implemented in this area through private development projects whenever possible and the pedestrian orientation should continue to be strengthened by encouraging small maximum frontyard setbacks and side-yard requirements. Parking should continue to be placed in above grade or underground facilities to the rear or center of buildings whenever possible and should be effectively screened. In addition to the landscaping within the streetscape improvements, businesses in this area should be encouraged to plant attractive front and side-yard landscape components and to use interesting awnings to draw attention to first floor retail components.

### **Downtown/City Center**

The City Center is focused around the intersection of Broad and Washington Streets and extends from Little Falls Street to Lawton Street and Park Avenue to Annandale Road. This section is characterized by a series of low- to mid-rise office buildings, some with first floor retail components and one- and two-story retail and restaurant uses. George Mason Square and the Robertson office building are focal points for this area; however, there is no overall cohesive image.

On the north side of Broad Street the existing businesses include an antique mall, a combination of a two-story historic frame structure and a one-story brick structure; the one-story CVS Pharmacy building; several one- to two-story brick retail structures with a mixture of retail and restaurant uses; the two- to four-story brick Robertson office building with retail on the ground floor and Applebee's, a single-story brick restaurant. The south side of Broad Street features the five- to six-story brick George Mason Square office building with retail on the ground floor, and the two and one-half to three-story brick Independence Square townhouse office complex.

The Downtown section of Broad Street has a fairly well-defined streetscape with almost all of the buildings set back a very short distance from the sidewalk and parking located to the side or rear of buildings. This strong building "wall" improves the security of the pedestrian envi-



ronment and contributes an element of visual cohesion. The completed streetscape elements include uniform brick sidewalks, planters, street trees, plantings and light fixtures, which have contributed a cohesive and pedestrian-friendly element to this area.

The Robertson Building, Independence Square, and George Mason Square were developed between the late 1970s and early 1990s. These buildings and many of the underutilized one- and two-story older buildings could redevelop in the future to up to seven stories under the existing zoning classifications. It is important that these redevelopment projects continue to maintain the existing setbacks and strengthen the existing building wall whether or not the potentially taller buildings are erected. Draft plans for the City Center project continue to promote these concepts.

### Significant Architectural Features

The original frame Falls Church (Episcopal), a historic structure located on South Washington Street, was built in 1733 and succeeded by the current brick structure in 1769. The architectural style and features of The Falls Church are reflected in other buildings within the City.

As noted above, the majority of the older and newer buildings in the Downtown area are constructed of brick. The Independence Square development is built in a colonial style with side gabled roofs and dormers. The Robertson Building, at 107 East Broad, is built in the Art Deco style with simple upper story angled display windows and a streamlined arcade, which are common to this period of architecture. George Mason Square is a more modern style angular brick building with an open arcade at the street level. Most other buildings in this area are 1950s and 1960s low-rise flat roofed brick structures with storefronts on the sidewalks.



### Future Character of the Downtown/City Center Area

The City's Center should display a more urban theme than other commercial areas within the City. An urban theme often includes buildings that are larger and taller than what currently exists in this area. Mixed uses within buildings, as well as structured and underground parking are also common elements in urban areas.

The City Center must be unique and vibrant with a strong sense of place. It should be designed to meet many of the residents' and employees' everyday needs for shopping, services, dining, recreation, cultural activities, and possibly civic needs, such as those served by the post office. The City Center should also create a regional draw for these activities. It must be designed in such a way that it will be convenient for pedestrians, motorists, and those traveling by other means. It must have an open plaza component to provide for a gathering space for residents and workers and a space for public events, and to act as an everyday place that people can dine and mingle within.



Preliminary plans for the City Center include a mixture of office, retail, residential, restaurant, and entertainment uses. The retail component should be placed at the street level with large display windows to provide for activity in that area; however, retail components could also be placed in other areas besides the first floor and at the streetfront. Creative use of commercial space in upper stories, below grade, and in the rear of buildings should be considered. Recreation, entertainment, and cultural uses do not necessarily need street front exposure to be successful.

Pedestrian activity should be promoted to create a lively atmosphere in the City Center area. To attract pedestrian activity, development should be kept at a human scale with building heights increased as the distance from the curb is increased. This is often referred to as a "stepped back" design, which creates less of a towering effect at the street level.

Parking in structured garages above grade in the center of blocks, underground, or at the rear of structures would allow the building wall to be created and reduce the



need for curb cuts on Broad Street, which would create fewer disturbances for the pedestrian. The creation of public open spaces, plazas, or outdoor dining areas where people can meet and have lunch or talk is essential in encouraging pedestrian activity in a downtown area. These plazas, or small meeting areas, can be made enticing with artwork or fountains such as those seen in Reston Town Center and the Crystal City water park. The existing streetscape with its attractive plantings and the landscaped median strip on West Broad Street has created a good basis for this type of environment.

### **Seven Corners**

This area is bordered by Route 7, Route 50, and Wilson Boulevard and is buffered by the Oakwood Cemetery and the Oakwood Apartments. It is relatively isolated from the remainder of the City of Falls Church. Existing development in this area is focused on strip retail, large pad retail uses and quasi-industrial uses.

### **Gateway Features**

The Seven Corners area is an important gateway into the City of Falls Church. It is marked by the intersection of Routes 50, Route 7 and Wilson Boulevard; however, the common public perception is that the businesses fronting on these roads are in Fairfax and Arlington Counties. This is an understandable mistake to make, because Plaza 7/Eden Center, Syms, Koons Ford, and Noland Plumbing are all large business establishments unlike those seen throughout the business corridors in the rest of the City. Route 50 is also unlike most of the "small-town" character seen throughout the majority of the City.

Significant facade improvements have recently been made to the Syms, Inc. store and to the Eden Center Shopping Center. Landscaping and signage at this entrance to the City could be improved as part of future redevelopment projects. Additional streetscape-type improvements should be considered for the Seven Corners area in an attempt to improve the overall appearance and bring some visual linkage to the remainder of the City. This would signal to people that they are entering a different area.

### **Future Character of the Seven Corners Area**

Because this area is separated from the rest of the City's commercial areas by a substantial low-density residential area, and because the business uses are larger than elsewhere in the City, it is difficult to visually associate it as part of Falls Church. Gateway and streetscape improvements will begin to set the tone for this area as part of the City of Falls Church, but other design elements are necessary to strengthen the image of this area.

## **The Washington Street Corridor**

### **North Washington Street**

This corridor extends from the intersection of Broad and Washington Streets to the Arlington County line. It is a very narrow corridor that is only one lot deep from Broad Street to the Columbia Baptist Church, where it widens to a full block. The North Washington Street corridor is characterized by a number of attractive redevelopment projects, but still includes some vacant and underutilized parcels. Low intensity uses closest to the East Falls Church Metro Station and I-66 should be redeveloped to take advantage of this location.

Buildings in this area range in style from single-family historic homes converted to businesses to four-story office structures. Fairly recent redevelopment efforts include a new building that is part of the Jennings Office Park, a somewhat modern three-story brick office building adjacent to North Washington Street with a large surface parking lot in front; Gateway Plaza, a modern four-story set of three brick office buildings with parking surrounding them; Gresham Place brick residential townhouses; Kaiser-Permanente, a three-story brick medical office building with a structured parking garage; Park Washington, a group of three-story townhouse style office buildings; and two low-rise Victorian style clapboard structures, the Sunrise retirement home and the Craver-Mathews-Smith office building.

West Jefferson Street has numerous one- and two-story quasi-industrial buildings that were built in the 1950s and 60s. These buildings are currently being used as auto repair shops, warehouses, and other service-oriented businesses. Little effort toward street beautification has been made in this area.

Another interesting component of North Washington Street is the Falls Church-Arlington fire station. This new uniquely and classically designed station, while not fronting on North Washington Street, still creates an improved appearance in this area. The newly restored section of Four Mile Run and pedestrian features in this area are also an improvement.

Streetscape conditions in this area are adequate, but are neither very attractive nor functional for pedestrians. Few street trees and pedestrian crosswalks exist and overhead utilities are still prevalent on most of North Washington Street. Sidewalk conditions are good in this area; however, the existing five foot widths are generally considered too small for commercial areas. On the west side of Lee Highway (Route 29), between West Jefferson Street and the City line, the number of curb cuts should

be reduced through lot consolidation to increase pedestrian safety. Streetscape improvements similar to those currently in place on West Broad Street should be implemented in the North Washington Street Corridor at some point in the future.

One of the most significant physical features of the North Washington Street corridor is its access to the East Falls Church Metro Station. The section of the corridor closest to the City's border is only approximately four blocks from the station, making this area ripe for redevelopment that will take advantage of this location.

### Significant Architectural Features

The two most notable design elements in the North Washington Street Corridor are the Columbia Baptist Church and the Crossman Methodist Church. Both churches are red brick with white wood detail. The spires of both churches are visible from Route 29 in Arlington and provide a sense of a "village like" scene to travelers entering the City from the north.

The Craver-Mathews-Smith and Sunrise redevelopment projects were built in the Victorian style that is reflective of many of the residential areas of Falls Church. Examples of Victorian architecture are seen throughout the City and have been reestablished at these North Washington Street sites.

### Gateway Features

A sign denoting entry into the City of Falls Church is located in the landscaped median of the 400 block of North Washington Street. At this location it is clear that you are entering a distinct area. However, because the land use changes become apparent at the intersection of Fairfax Drive and North Washington Street, the average traveler is prone to think that this is the City line. As the Arlington County area closest to the City redevelops with a mixture of commercial and residential uses and the section of the City closest to the line does the same, the distinction between the two jurisdictions will become less clear. And while the City would like to create some type of distinction to make travelers aware that they are entering the jurisdiction, development on the City side of the border should blend with new development in Arlington County.

Another suggestion for creating an effective and attractive gateway feature for this area is that a pedestrian bridge be constructed on the west side of North Washington Street between West Jefferson Street and Arlington County.

### Future Character of North Washington Street

Some infill development and redevelopment opportunities exist in the section of North Washington Street between Broad Street and Columbia Street. These parcels

should develop with mid-rise buildings including parking located in structures to the rear, side, center of block or underground whenever possible. Structures should be built as close to the sidewalk as possible. Streetscape improvements should be consistent throughout this corridor with wider sidewalks, pedestrian crosswalks, uniform street furniture, lighting, and attractive landscaping.

Redevelopment in the area between Columbia Street and the City border should take place with both the gateway concept and proximity to the Metro station in mind. Development in this area should take on many of the characteristics of a more urban and pedestrian-friendly environment. Features in this area should be similar to what is being recommended for the downtown area of the City, but with slightly shorter buildings and more open space. A mixture of commercial and residential uses within buildings and within the area should be created. As in the rest of North Washington Street, parking should be located in structures located to the rear, side, or underground during redevelopment whenever possible.

In this section of North Washington Street it is very important to create a pedestrian environment. To do this requires the creation of a strong building wall with buildings located as close to the sidewalk as possible with large retail windows on the first floor. To keep development at a human scale, building heights should be increased with the distance from the curb or "stepped back." Using different types of building surface treatments and materials can also create the visual effect of a smaller building. The addition of small public spaces with seating and attractive landscaping will invite shoppers, diners, and employees to walk and gather in this section of North Washington Street. Finally, the addition of outdoor dining will attract pedestrians and motorists to this area.

New development in the North Washington Street corridor should be sensitive to and emphasize the presence of existing architecturally significant features in this area. As noted above, the primary features in this area are the two church steeples. The view of the steeples should not be obstructed, but rather building mass and open space should be used whenever possible to accentuate these features.

### South Washington Street

This area extends from the intersection of Broad and South Washington Streets to the Fairfax County line. The majority of the South Washington Street area is characterized by older structures, low intensity development with poorly designed sites and parking lots, poor pedestrian connections, and lack of landscaping. Most of the buildings in this area were built independently with no coordination of site planning or architecture with adjoining properties. Many single use structures exist on single

lots, some of which were once used as residences. Several small strips also exist. Buildings are generally set back from the sidewalk with parking in front of the businesses. A tall radio tower is situated behind the Tower Square shopping center, but does not create an overbearing appearance. A significant factor that has determined the pattern of development in this area is that one side of South Washington Street is within the City of Falls Church and the other side of the street is within Fairfax County. This will continue to be a concern in redevelopment efforts for this area.



The only architecturally significant structure in the South Washington Street corridor is The Falls Church Episcopal. This parcel is generally viewed as part of the downtown area, but its scale and style can also set the tone for redevelopment in the northern portion of South Washington Street. Another focal point for development in this area is Tripps Run.

Streetscape and pedestrian access improvements are desperately needed in the South Washington Street Corridor, particularly in the Hillwood/Annandale Road area. Sidewalks vary in width and state of repair with no painted crosswalks or pedestrian-activated signals. No consistent tree plantings exist and overhead utilities hamper tree growth and attractiveness. A median strip has been suggested in several locations to improve the appearance of the streetscape and pedestrian crossing capability. The number of curb cuts along South Washington Street should also be limited during redevelopment to improve pedestrian and vehicular safety.

### **Gateway Features**

The South Washington Street corridor is an important gateway into the City of Falls Church from two locations. The City's boundary with Fairfax County is located near the intersection of South Washington Street and Welcome Drive and runs along South Washington Street (Route 29) to Annandale Road. From the south, motorists traveling north on Annandale Road, come to the top of a small hill near Galloway United Methodist Church and

have a view of downtown Falls Church. This view is fairly attractive with a series of small shops in the foreground and new office buildings in the background. The entrance into the City from the west via Route 29 is not so attractive with older, somewhat rundown commercial buildings, numerous curbcuts and unkempt green areas. A strong strip commercial flavor is also present in this view.

It is important that the City denote this gateway with appropriate signage and attractive landscape features. Streetscape improvements, similar to what is seen on West Broad Street, should also be considered for this area. In addition, the redevelopment of South Washington Street with a consolidated appearance, will help to strengthen this gateway into the City.

### **The Future Character of South Washington Street**

Future development in this area should create a somewhat higher density, more consolidated appearance and a visual link with the City's downtown. The addition of streetscape improvements and pedestrian linkages will begin to define this area. Small scale businesses should continue to exist in the area between Tripps Run and the Fairfax County line. The appearance of these and redeveloped uses should be improved through facade changes, parking placed in structures to the side and rear of structures whenever possible, and the use of a variety of architectural features that will be included in the design guidelines for this area. Existing commercial strips should be consolidated in a cohesive manner.

The area between Annandale Road and Broad Street can be redeveloped with a slightly more urban theme due to its proximity to the Downtown. Larger and taller buildings that are stepped back from the street with architectural features, similar to those seen in the Downtown, could be developed here. This section should continue the theme of buildings located close to the sidewalk with minimum sideyards as currently exists with George Mason Square, Independence Square, and the small collection of businesses adjacent to it on the east side of South Washington Street. Parking in this area should be located in structures either above or below grade and to the rear of structures or the center of buildings. Shared parking should be encouraged wherever possible. Ground floor retail uses should have large windows. Small pieces of green space should be incorporated into courtyards or public plazas.

The City should consider the possibility of adding landscaped medians at certain locations on South Washington Street. These medians could serve to improve the ability of pedestrians to cross this wide roadway and could provide a visual break to the existing expanse of pavement. The intersection of Hillwood and



Annandale Road should be improved with increased landscaping, façade improvements, and pedestrian facilities. Medians similar to those on the eastern portion of Hillwood Avenue should be considered for the remainder of Hillwood and tied into improvements at the intersection of Hillwood Avenue and Annandale Road.

The 1991 Hyett-Palma Study titled *Building the Vision - The Washington Street Corridor*, suggested that all automotive service uses be clustered together and their appearances improved through building maintenance and landscaping. This study also recommended that existing businesses be encouraged to make simple improvements such as exterior painting, installation of new awnings, and improved landscaping.

Tripps Run is also a significant natural feature in the Washington Street Corridor. To whatever extent is possible, it should be protected and enhanced. Surrounding development should be sensitive to this need to enhance the appearance of this resource.

### Character of Residential Areas

The City's residential neighborhoods are predominantly low density in nature. They have retained a quiet small town character complete with historic homes, tree-lined streets, pedestrian-friendliness, and neighborhood parks. Falls Church's residential character is also displayed in its natural features and parks, which tie the City together and provide a fabric for the business environment and residential neighborhoods.

Trees have long been an integral component of the City's unique character. In 1875 the Falls Church town charter gave the Town Council the authority "to provide and protect shade trees." Beginning in the 1880s the Village Improvement Society (now the Village Preservation and Improvement Society) planted trees along Broad Street in an effort to start the tradition of tree-lined streets within the City.

Today, the City continues to be known for its tree-lined neighborhood streets and landscaped commercial corridors. Three trees in the City have been registered as "Champions" on the Virginia Forests Registry: a native scarlet oak; a Japanese red maple; and a copper beech. Slightly more than four percent of the City's roughly 1,080 acres are either parkland or open space. The most notable of the City's ten parks, most of which are neighborhood parks, is the Cherry Hill Farm Park in the center of the City. Cherry Hill provides not only a natural respite from the urban surroundings, but also acts as the setting for numerous community events.

Despite its largely urban setting, the City strives to preserve and protect the natural environment within its boundaries with special emphasis on its streams which traverse the

community, its trees, and the wildlife that make their home in the City. City Hall, Cherry Hill Park, and the Community Center are excellent contributing factors to Falls Church's "Tree City" image and overall quaint character.



The architecture of residential structures within Falls Church is very rich with an assortment of historic homes and structures, most of which were built during the Victorian Era. Tours are conducted within the City to display its fine examples of Victorian architecture. There are over 200 pre-1930 homes in the City which have been surveyed and the pertinent information recorded in the 1996 survey completed by Traceries, Inc. A variety of architectural styles include four-squares, bungalows, federal styles, colonials, farmhouses, and Victorian homes. Front porches and gabled roofs are a common theme in many of these styles. The majority of the City's residences were built after 1920 and include an assortment of cape cods, colonials, ranch style houses, modernistic houses and townhouses. Construction of a number of new homes and renovations to existing homes have occurred since 2000. Many of these homes have been created in the Arts and Craft style.



A common trend in the City is for infill lots to be developed with homes that are much larger than the existing homes in that area. The same situation is occurring with additions to small and often older homes in the City. The effect is that the existing smaller homes are sometimes

overshadowed by the mass of the new homes and green-space and trees are significantly reduced. Architectural details within the newer homes are also sometimes incompatible with the existing neighborhood. The [City's Design Guidelines](#) include recommendations on making new infill homes and additions to homes more compatible with those in the surrounding neighborhood.

### Future Character of the City's Residential Areas

The residential areas within the City are expected to remain similar in character to what exists today with the addition of, some infill single-family detached development, additions to existing single-family detached homes, and possibly more apartments and/ or condominiums. A number of sites are currently designated for mixed-use within the City and these could potentially accommodate any type of residential unit.

The size and design of single-family infill development and additions to existing structures that are considerably larger than those structures existing in neighborhoods

should be more carefully considered in employing methods by which they can appear to be more compatible with the surrounding structures. The large number of mature trees and landscaping should also continue to be a distinguishing factor within the City's residential areas. Commercial development adjacent to residential areas should continue to be buffered in mixed-use and single use areas such that residential areas remain peaceful areas to live and raise families.

The City's Community Character goals and strategies are to be achieved largely by maintaining a strong social sense of community with strong participation as well as by creating a strong, visually cohesive, vibrant, and pedestrian-friendly City. The goals and strategies within the matrix below describe many methods for implementing the suggested changes. The "Required Action" and "Responsible Party(ies)," columns of the matrix provide additional guidance to the City in areas which will require additional actions or resources to achieve the community character, appearance, and design goals and strategies.

*VISION: The City will be recognized as a great place to live, visit, shop, dine, do business, and work with a vibrant mix of uses, while retaining in an urban village its community-oriented and historic character. City residents and businesses will continue to be very active in a variety of boards, commissions and municipal affairs. Annual celebratory traditions, such as the Fourth of July fireworks, Memorial Day Festivities, and Farmers Market will be continued to increase interaction among City residents and contribute to making Falls Church an interesting and delightful place to live. The Falls Church Design Guidelines will be implemented to visually create cohesive architecture and design in the commercial districts, which will complement the residential neighborhoods, conveying a character that is visually distinctive from its neighbors. Landscaping in the City will continue to be preserved and enhanced and cohesive streetscape treatments will be implemented in both the Broad Street and Washington Street corridors.*

### **GOAL 1. Promote the use of sound architectural and design principles that create visual attractiveness, unify related areas, and promote an appropriate character and appearance throughout the City.**

Strategies	Explanation	Required Actions	Responsible Party(ies)
A. Utilize the City of Falls Church <a href="#">Design Guidelines</a> as a guide for all new development within the City.	The Design Guidelines are currently used to review only projects that are subject to the site plan process – all commercial, mixed-use, multi-family residential, and larger residential subdivisions. The City should consider expanding this review to projects not subject to the site plan process.	Continue to review projects using the Design Guideline criteria as part of site plan staff reports.  Discuss the possibility of utilizing the design guidelines when reviewing building plans for new individual homes and home additions to at a minimum make suggestions to homeowners and contractors.	Planning Division, Zoning Division, and Department of Environmental Services.
B. Encourage citizens to utilize the Falls Church <a href="#">Design Guidelines</a> in an effort to affect the visual character of the City.	The design guidelines include suggestions for changes to existing single-family homes and for new home construction, as well as for new commercial development or redevelopment. When citizens either voluntarily utilize these guidelines or encourage their neighbors to utilize these guidelines, they will be playing an active role in creating a community with strong visual compatibility.	Offer the residential design guidelines and staff advice regarding the implementation of the design guidelines to property owners and contractors when they apply to construct additions to existing homes or for permits for new homes.	Department of Environmental Services and Planning Division



Strategies	Explanation	Required Actions	Responsible Party(ies)
C. Promote compatibility with existing neighborhoods, improvement of the existing housing stock, and environmental preservation in relation to infill residential development.	The City has been undergoing dramatic changes in its residential neighborhoods with large additions to existing homes and with older homes being torn down and new much larger ones being constructed. This is good in some respects; however, the integrity of the existing neighborhoods and the environment must also be considered.	Consider revisions in the zoning ordinance regarding building coverage, impervious coverage, and substandard lots.	Development Services Division and City Manager
D. Develop a strategy for attracting innovative developers who have a respect for quality design.	The City should continue to try to attract creative developers, who could be very influential in new development and redevelopment of certain areas according to the recommendations of this chapter.	Develop incentives to attract these persons or organizations to areas that are targeted for redevelopment.	Planning Division and Office of Economic Development

## ***GOAL 2. Strengthen the appearance and accessibility of the City's commercial corridors.***

Strategies	Explanation	Required Actions	Responsible Party(ies)
A. Complete streetscape improvements to the Village section of Broad Street.	Plans for the completion of the streetscape in the Village section have been made, but not yet implemented. Some of this will occur through redevelopment projects, however, the City may need to complete the work on some interspersed parcels.	Incorporate funding for streetscape construction on parcels that are not anticipated to redevelop in the next five years within the Capital Improvement Program (CIP).	Planning Division Department of Environmental Services
B. Create and implement a streetscape improvement program for the Washington Street corridor and in the Seven Corners area.	<p>There is a lack of visual cohesion among some parts of the Washington Street corridor, especially along South Washington Street, with the remainder of the City's commercial areas. Various coordinated streetscape improvements similar to what has been implemented on West Broad Street could begin to create this cohesion.</p> <p>The Seven Corners area of the City is not readily recognized as being a part of the City of Falls Church, because the commercial uses within it are so different in nature than those found within the rest of the City. Streetscape improvements are especially important for this area, because this area is a primary gateway into the City and because it should be made somewhat more distinguishable from Fairfax and Arlington Counties, and more strongly linked to Falls Church.</p>	<p>Consider allocating public funds for the development and implementation of a streetscape plan for the Washington Street corridor and the Seven Corners area.</p> <p>Utilize the Design Guidelines for streetscape standard development in the Washington Street corridor and Seven Corners areas.</p> <p>Encourage property owners to improve landscaping, lighting, street furniture and other elements.</p>	Planning Division Department of Environmental Services

Strategies	Explanation	Required Actions	Responsible Party(ies)
C. Encourage the undergrounding of utilities in the commercial corridors.	Existing utility lines can remain even after new development or redevelopment projects have been completed. This detracts from the visual improvements of the new development.	Continue to require property owners to underground new utility lines.  Develop incentives for property owners to underground existing utilities, including the use of proffers in development projects.	Planning Division, Engineering Division, and City Manager
D. Promote redevelopment, renovation and facade and landscaping improvement efforts in the Broad and Washington Street corridors.	Existing buildings may not reflect the intent of the City's Design Guidelines. Over-scaled features, haphazard designs, and bland use of materials can undermine the character and quality of the community.  Landscaping associated with some businesses and parking lots in the commercial corridors is inadequate and/or poorly maintained.	Encourage businesses in these areas to utilize the Design Guidelines when making facade improvements. This advice could be given at the time of building or sign permit applications.  Develop landscape design guidelines for the commercial corridors. These guidelines should specify size, spacing, and species of trees and other plantings for various space and location constraints.	Office of Economic Development, Planning Division, and Department of Environmental Services
E. Continue to encourage any redevelopment or new construction in the commercial corridors to bring building facades up to the sidewalk and place parking underground or in above grade structured parking that is screened.	For aesthetic purposes, it is desirable to locate parking areas such that they are not fully visible from the street. In addition, pedestrians generally do not feel as safe walking in areas where there is no physical barrier on the building side of the sidewalk. In areas where parking lots lie between the sidewalk and buildings, pedestrians feel the need to be aware of cars entering and exiting parking lots. Parking garages also represent a much more efficient utilization of land than do surface lots.	Consider maximum building setbacks within the zoning ordinance.  Continue to encourage the use of structured parking in the commercial corridors.	Planning Division
F. Encourage buildings that are compatible in scale and design with a pedestrian environment and adjacent roadways.	The height of building walls that are very close to pedestrian facilities must be considered in the design phase of projects. In some cases, buildings can be stepped back such that sections that are further away from pedestrian facilities could be taller than those at the streetwall. Recommended standards also exist for the ratio of building height to the width of the adjacent roadway. These should also be considered.	Utilize the criteria within the Design Guidelines to create buildings with perceived smaller massing and with interesting facades and storefronts.	Planning Division
G. Discourage the widening of streets and intersections wherever possible.	Although street and intersection widenings are completed to accommodate increased vehicular traffic flow, these changes make these areas less visually attractive to everyone and the ability of pedestrians to safely cross such a street or intersection is impaired. The pedestrian feels less comfort and is less attracted to walking along a street that is six lanes wide than they do along a street that is only two to four lanes wide.	Do not plan for the widening of roads and intersections in long-range plans and allow them as associated with development proposals.	Planning Division and Department of Environmental Services
H. Increase vegetative cover and tree canopy in parking areas (surface and structured) to soften the hardscape character in new and existing facilities.	Any new development or redevelopment that occurs within the City should be encouraged to include significant landscaping within parking areas to make them more attractive and to provide shade to motorists and pedestrians.	Implement the city's parking lot landscaping ordinance and Design Guidelines recommendations during the site plan process.	Planning Division

Strategies	Explanation	Required Actions	Responsible Party(ies)
I.Improve the ability of pedestrians to move back and forth across Broad and Washington Street.	Long sections of West Broad and Washington Streets have no traffic lights and high traffic volumes, making it extremely difficult and dangerous for pedestrians to move from one side to the other. This will be increasingly important as more housing and retail uses are constructed in the Broad and Washington Street corridors. It is also important to note that a variety of additional sidewalk and street improvements are needed to increase pedestrian safety in the South Washington Street corridor.	Construct several new pedestrian or vehicular/pedestrian crossings in the commercial corridors.  Develop a plan for pedestrian access and crossing improvements in the South Washington Street corridor.  Consider the addition of landscaped medians in key locations in the commercial corridors both for beautification, to provide for protected turning lanes, and to improve pedestrian safety.	Planning Division and Department of Environmental Resources

***GOAL 3. Encourage new development or redevelopment that includes a mixture of uses, public gathering spaces, adequate landscaping, and on-site parking.***

Strategies	Explanation	Required Actions	Responsible Party(ies)
A.Encourage new gathering places in large redevelopment projects.	The current design of the structures in the City's business districts makes them relatively unattractive as public gathering places. These areas should include attractive landscape features with seating areas and should be somewhat protected from the noise and traffic hazards of nearby major thoroughfares.	Negotiate the appropriate location and use of public spaces within each development project.	City Manager and Planning Division
B.Promote day and nighttime consumer and pedestrian activity in the commercial corridors to increase liveliness, safety and opportunities for residents to dine, shop and recreate within the City.	For an area to meet its full revitalization potential and become lively, both day and nighttime activity is necessary at the street level. Residents who live in the commercial corridors, employees, as well as diners and shoppers, can create this type of activity.	Encourage redevelopment in areas that are designated for "Mixed-Use", particularly in City Center, to include office, retail, and residential uses.  Encourage commercial uses that cater to nighttime activities.	Planning Division and Office of Economic Development

**GOAL 4. Develop higher density, more urban commercial areas in the City Center and in the Gordon Road area.**

Strategies	Explanation	Required Actions	Responsible Party(ies)
A. Encourage cohesive development of these areas in a more urban theme than other sections of the City.	Existing development in the Downtown/ City Center area is not only underutilizing the potential for larger and taller buildings, but there is also little cohesion among the structures in terms of massing, architectural styling and details. The west end of the City also offers opportunities for somewhat more dense and urban style development, especially in the Gordon Road triangle area.	Continue to encourage appropriate increases in density in the commercial corridors. In some cases this may be only the density allowed under the current zoning regulations and possibly more density in other areas.	Planning Division and Office of Economic Development
B. Include retail uses on the first floor of structures in the commercial corridors with and office and/or residential uses on the upper floors.	Office uses will probably continue to remain prominent in the Downtown area. At the same time, some retail activity, especially at the first floor pedestrian level is crucial to create an interesting pedestrian and automobile environment. Drivers also need to see what there is to offer when passing through town. Retail uses on the first floors of office or a mixture of office and residential buildings will help to create a lively downtown area.	Require retail uses on the first floor of structures in the commercial corridors.	Planning Division, Zoning Division, and Office of Economic Development
C. Make the area centered around the intersection of Broad and Maple Avenue the City Center with a pedestrian connecting corridor, commercial corridor and green space corridor linking it to other parts of the City.	Pedestrian links to the City's facilities and other commercial corridors have been significantly strengthened through the implementation of the West Broad Street streetscape improvements, which will continue to be constructed. However, green-space or natural path links from the City Center to anywhere else are nonexistent. In addition, redeveloped commercial corridors linking to City Center will provide attractive and interesting connections for pedestrians.	Create a plan to designate pedestrian and green space corridors/natural paths that link City Center and other commercial areas to the rest of the City.  Continue to plan for redevelopment within the Broad and Washington Street and Maple Avenue corridors that connect to City Center.  Encourage developers to allow easements to create small natural corridors linked to other parts of the City.	Planning Division

**GOAL 5. Enhance the gateways to the City to make them more attractive and create a distinctive sense of place.**

Strategies	Explanation	Required Actions	Responsible Party(ies)
A. Affect the appearance of gateway areas as more reflective of the character of Falls Church.	<p>The types of uses and the appearance of those uses located near an entrance to a city play an important role in creating the general impression of the City upon visitors. Special landscape treatments, signature architecture, public art, and streetscape elements can help improve the appearance of these areas. These entrances should be inviting, but not visually overwhelming to the visitor. They should reflect community character and be an appropriate statement about the City. The Design Guidelines should be used to steer development within the gateways.</p> <p>Several of the City's gateways also currently contain commercial uses that do not represent the character of the City as conveyed by the vision statements in this document.</p>	<p>Utilize the Design Guidelines to steer development within the gateways.</p> <p>Consider changing the zoning Districts or permitted uses in these gateway areas, particularly the sale and service of automobiles.</p>	Planning Division and Zoning Division
B. Create features in gateways that alert people that they are entering the City of Falls Church.	<p>Historic Falls Church signs have in the past been located at the four primary entrances to the City on Broad and Washington Streets; however, some of these signs are missing and/or are not prominent enough to get the attention of people.</p>	Consider new means of alerting people that they are entering the City.	

**GOAL 6. Enhance and preserve viewsheds or vistas within the City.**

Strategies	Explanation	Required Actions	Responsible Party(ies)
Identify viewsheds that are worth protecting and preserve them.	<p>Several views from a given location are important elements of the character of the City of Falls Church. An example of a viewshed is the view associated with the prominent church steeples in the Washington Street Corridor. These steeples, in combination with the undulating topography, create several unique viewsheds within the City.</p>	<p>Identify significant viewsheds within the Design Guidelines document when it is updated and offer guidance on the protection of these features.</p> <p>Review proposed development projects for the potential increase in building size and heights throughout the commercial corridors in relationship to the preservation of important viewsheds.</p>	Planning Division

**GOAL 7. Provide leadership in design and landscaping excellence in the creation and maintenance of public spaces and public buildings.**

Strategies	Explanation	Required Actions	Responsible Party(ies)
A. Design and maintain the City's parkland in a creative and quality manner, such that it is recognized for excellence in the region.	The City's existing parklands have been excellently designed and maintained.	Create and maintain any new parkland with the same level of quality as the existing parkland.	Urban Forestry Division and Recreation and Parks Division
B. Design and landscape public buildings and spaces in quality fashion.	<p>The design of public buildings and the space surrounding them is an important reflection of the quality of the local government both to residents and visitors. These buildings can also set the example for the type of quality the City expects to see in private development.</p>	Consider this policy during the renovation of existing facilities or the construction of new facilities.	Planning Division



**GOAL 8. Encourage strong and effective citizen participation in community and municipal affairs.**

Strategies	Explanation	Required Actions	Responsible Party(ies)
A. Continue to support the many citizen boards, commissions, and non-profit social groups.	Limited City staff support and funding is offered to a number of boards and commissions within the City and other City services are offered to all boards and commissions. This support is important to the functioning of these volunteer groups who provide many valuable services to the community.	Continue providing staff liaisons and funding, when appropriate, to boards and commissions.  Provide training for board and commission members who are involved with the development review process, including the BZA, HARB, Tree Commission, Planning Commission, and CACT should receive training on the Comprehensive Plan and other City Ordinances.	City Manager
B. Improve the quality and level of public awareness and participation in the public hearing process and other City planning-related activities, such as development review, the municipal budget and CIP, and long-range planning.	Many persons have expressed a desire to receive notification of planning-related and other important municipal activities. The current notification process is not easily accessible to all persons and the public hearing process is not a very "user-friendly" participation process.	Utilize the City's web page and e-mail listservs to whatever extent possible to keep citizens aware of government processes.	Communications Office

**GOAL 9. Encourage the usage and implementation of this Comprehensive Plan document.**

Strategies	Explanation	Required Actions	Responsible Party(ies)
A. Encourage citizens and business owners to reference the Comprehensive Plan when modifying their properties and in looking for ways to improve the economy or doing community service.	Make the plan easily accessible.	Create an interactive web-based version of the Comprehensive Plan immediately following the adoption of the document.	Communications Office
B. Consider the Comprehensive Plan in all relevant Planning Commission and City Council decisions.	Currently the Planning Division provides Comprehensive Plan information in staff reports, but other divisions do not regularly do so.	Add a category titled "Comprehensive Plan Compatibility" on all staff reports to the City Council and Planning Commission.  Provide training in the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan to members of boards and commissions involved in the development review process.	All Departments
C. Encourage City Officials responsible for developing the budget and Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to integrate Comprehensive Plan content into project goals.	The Comprehensive Plan has not always been given a high priority in the designation of Budget and CIP projects. This is important because the Comprehensive Plan is the only overall City plan that assigns tasks and goals for the future.	Refer to the Comprehensive Plan goals and strategies to develop CIP items or to prioritize suggested projects.	All Departments
D. Encourage boards and commissions to reference the Comprehensive Plan in their annual reports to the City Council.	Boards and Commissions could use the Plan's goals and strategies as a gauge for their accomplishments on an annual basis.	Create an award for individuals or organizations who show consistent or exemplary implementation of the Comprehensive Plan	Planning Division and City Manager